

Q: I am new to the base and noticed that there seems to be no policy in place addressing the lack of issued cold weather gear for the blues uniforms. Would it be possible to enact a policy that allowed the wear of the ABU/BDU/Flt Suit when temperatures averaged below freezing?

No. While you can wear the parka with ABU and Blues uniforms, coats also come in blue at the uniform store. I wore the blue overcoat with my service dress last weekend.

Q: I have been assigned to the 28th Maintenance Squadron for the last two years and I know how cold it is during the winter. With this being said I am concerned about the lack of cold weather gear being issued to Our airman. In my flight (Avionics) our airmen are not being issued the green parkas. They are being issued thermals, fleece, watch cap, and gloves. I also have several Airman (including myself) that were issued BDU cold weather gear that are not obsolete and are now being told that we cannot get parkas because we have been here too long.

This would not be an issue but our only alternative is buying the AF windbreaker (APECS) which I have and does not keep you warm. I Work mids and have seen nights that it gets to -20 with wind chill and feel that this is not an acceptable alternative for the parka. I have sent this issue up my chain of command several times without any results.

This comes up at the start of every winter, and just like last year (about \$200,000 of wing money), the wing will find money to fund the cold weather gear the units determine their folks need to get the mission done. We rely on squadron commanders to determine their requirements, as different jobs require different equipment (last year 47 parkas were issued to folks in avionics flight). Can't remember the last maintainer I've seen that preferred the parka to work outdoors, but I'll leave that to squadron commanders to figure out. I've specifically asked the MXG to take a look at what might more be needed.

Q: The Air Force has been pushing its new PT program for several months now. From what I see around the base on Monday mornings some people are really embracing the idea of being a more physically fit force. Will there be any program to help monitor the quality of food choices available to the airmen at the DFAC, Club and Bowling Alley? I visit the Bowling Alley or the Club on a regular basis and I would like to see a more health conscious menu. I have asked the Club manager in the past for simple changes to the menu and buffet line such as adding the nutrition information or limiting the amount of butter and sauces they add to the steamed vegetables. I was told that they were creating a new menu and that people like their vegetables with butter. Is there any way we can help the airmen of Ellsworth make a more informed decision of what they put in their mouths?

We're working to make Dakota's a place where you can always find a healthy option. While we still have some distance to go, the addition of fish, pasta bar, etc. are some of the ways we're trying to get there. There are plenty of places to find a greasy burger or something deep fried around the installation--we want Dakota's to be the place where you can get the chicken fried steak, or pickup the grilled chicken breast next to it instead.

Q: I was informed by several of my airmen this morning that the Dining Facility has changed their policy on "to go" meals. As of now, they are required to be in uniform to get their food to

go and the "to go" containers are kept behind the counter and they have to ask to get the containers. The issues I see with this idea is that now the airmen cannot take their food to their rooms to enjoy their dinners in the privacy of their own homes. If they want to eat dinner and watch a movie, or eat and study for classes this is now impossible. One of my airmen goes to class in the evening and takes his food with him so he won't be late since his class begins after work. Now he would have to remain in uniform at his college class just because he needs to take his meal to go. I understand the aspect of putting the containers behind the counter to save money, but why do the airmen have to remain in uniform to get their food to go? And is PT gear considered a uniform, because they have also been turned away in this manner? Thank you very much for your time in this matter.

Airmen are not required to be in uniform to get "to go" meals--just need to have an ID card. The containers were relocated to make sure that folks eating at the Dining Facility weren't using them (saves money). This didn't change the ability to get a "to go" meal. We've confirmed the DFAC has this understanding.

Q: We have been at this base for 6 years, and one thing I have had a problem with since the beginning is that all family oriented events are during the work week. Spouse appreciation day, the picnic, play group, even the family classes at the gym, ect... I am a working spouse who has never been made to feel welcome on this base simply because I cant afford to take time off work. Why cant we have at least some of the events on a weekend, or in the evenings?

Over the past year, we've offered over 100 events and programs during evening hours and on the weekends including classes at the Bellamy Fitness Center, family appreciation night at Dakota's, kid/teen events at our youth and teen centers and a myriad of opportunities at the Airman and Family Readiness Center. Actually, we work very hard to have events at varied times, but the reality is events on the weekend are poorly attended. We tried to have a Heartlink (Spouse Orientation) on a Saturday but no one signed up. Did I see you at the bowling alley last Friday night for the costume contest? Will you be with me at the Trivia Night tonight at Dakota's? Let the Airman and Family Readiness Center know what you're missing, and we'll work on it.

Q: Is it legal for a commander to require their Airman to wear the ABU versus the BDU before the mandatory wear date of November 2011?

While installation commanders have the authority to further supplement uniform guidance, 28 BW policy is "an authorized uniform is an authorized uniform." We have made the conscious decision to not further complicate the wear of the uniform.